



Sushi chef on a roll

Spinnin' a Dusty Groove

What's going on at Marvin

The Coretta Scott King Awards

Shayla Wilson on her high horse

African-American cuisine



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Making great strides

Equestrianism has a long and illustrious history, dating back to the Bronze Age, and as author Mary Midkiff writes in her book, “She Flies Without Wings: How Horses Touch a Woman’s Soul,” women and horses have always been drawn to each other.

Modern-day equestrian Shayla Wilson continues to garner distinctions in this sport — one that doesn’t typically see women rising to its top. This comes despite the fact that, as Midkiff reminds us, more than 1 million girls and women are involved in horse-related activities in the U.S.

Growing up in Orlando, Fla., Wilson had a drive and determination that remains with her today. She loved horses from her girlhood, homing in on television shows and picture books that featured them. As she grew, she studied with renowned trainers and owners, facilitating her experiences by exercising and grooming horses at various horses farms and equestrian centers, and working as everything from a trail ride leader and show groom to a breeding operator and stable hand in order to pay her way. The bulk of her professional training came from Fernando Cardenas, a professional equestrian and head trainer and owner of a boarding, training and breeding facility located in Florida.

“I think Orlando is a wonderful place and is multicultural, but at the same time I never really had a true sense of my culture and where I came from until I moved to California,” she says, referring to her move to the Los Angeles area in May 2010. “I’m learning all these life lessons out here.”

Her journey to California includes a stint at Florida University as the only African-American on the equestrian team. She then ended up at picturesque Virginia Intermont College, recognized as one of the South’s more prestigious institutions for educating women and the top equine university in the nation, on academic and athletic

scholarships. Wilson enrolled in the highest-level training program available at Intermont and earned a key spot on the dressage team, which is sanctioned by the Intercollegiate Dressage Association.

IDA aims to introduce students to the equestrian discipline of dressage, one of three Olympic equestrian disciplines defined as precise maneuvers of a trained horse in response to slight movements from the rider. Once again, Wilson was the first African-American on the team, studying under world-class trainers and specializing in stadium jumping and dressage disciplines. She graduated with honors in 2008.

Her aforementioned drive and determination led to championships in major classes at nationally recognized horse shows. For instance, Wilson has competed at Horse Shows in the Sun at Ocala, a seven-week event offering different types of competitions and a nationally qualifying show. She was awarded two reserve champions for the timed divisions.

Her latest endeavor? “I have Olympic dreams,” she says. “I always have different mentors and trainers who lead me in that direction.” Equestrian events have been held at the Olympic Games since the early 1900s, and equestrian is the only sport event where men and women compete together. Wilson has hopes to eventually become an Olympic equestrian athlete.

In the meantime, Wilson is working as a head trainer for Compton Junior Posse, a nonprofit whose mission is to “keep kids on horses and off the streets.”

“Working with the kids and the horses and seeing how they interact has made me care more about things outside of the sport,” she says. She trains CJP kids on a full-time basis, encouraging inner city and underprivileged youth to set academic and career goals.

“These kids have made me more adult, more thankful and more motivated to do what I do,” she concludes.



Shayla Wilson

Book smart

In 1969, while the country was in turmoil over civil rights issues, school librarians Mabel McKissick and Glyndon Greer first met at an annual American Library Association Meeting in New Jersey. As they viewed a poster of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., at a publisher's booth, they discovered their mutual love of children's literature, and their agreement on the lack of awards for African-American authors and illustrators. Publisher John Carroll, who heard their discussion, suggested they should create such an award.

Within months, the two had formed a task force "to commemorate the life and works of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and to honor the late Mrs. Coretta Scott King for her courage and determination to work for peace and world brotherhood."

A year after the librarians' meeting, author Lillie Patterson received the first award for her biography, "Martin Luther King Jr., Man of Peace," at the New Jersey Library Association's gala. By 1972, the award was presented at a breakfast during

the ALA annual meeting, although it was 1982 before the national association recognized the award as an official association honor. At the award's 10th anniversary celebration, Coretta Scott King was the featured speaker.

The original award for an outstanding book by an African-American author was joined in 1974 by a second award, for illustration. In 1995, a third award, now known as the Coretta Scott King/John Steptoe Award for New Talent, was created "to spotlight promising writers and artists." And in 2009, the award committee announced a fourth honor: The Coretta Scott King-Virginia Hamilton Lifetime Achievement Award, presented biannually "to an

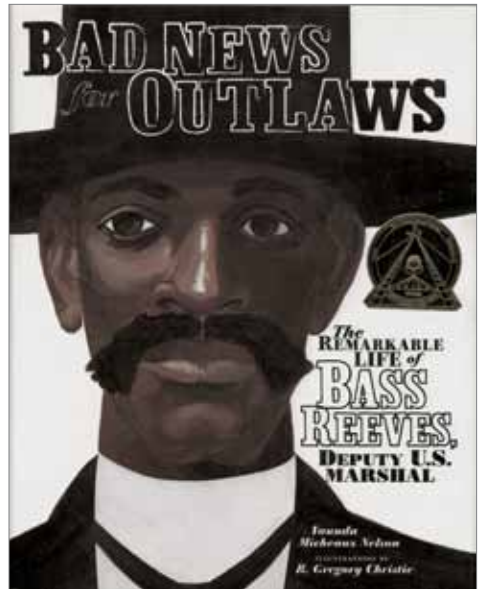
African-American author, illustrator, or author/illustrator (whose) body of ... published books for children and/or young adults (has) made a significant and lasting literary contribution."

The seal on each award is a circle containing the image of a black child reading a book. According to the ALA, the seal contains "five main religious symbols (that) represent nonsectarianism (while) a superimposed pyramid symbolizes both strength and Atlanta University (the award's original

headquarters). At the apex ... is a dove, symbolic of (Dr. King's doctrine) of peace, (with) rays that shine toward peace and brotherhood." Over the last 41 years, the Coretta Scott King Award has

become one of the most prestigious, given to "honor African-American authors and illustrators of outstanding books for children and young adults that demonstrate sensitivity to the African-American experience via literature and illustration.... The award encourages the artistic expression of the black experience via literature and the graphic arts in biographical, social and historical treatments by African-American authors and illustrators."

In 2010 the \$1,000 Author Award went to Vaunda Micheaux Nelson for her historical story of the Old West, titled "Bad News for Outlaws: The Remarkable Story of Bass Reeves." Photographer Charles R. Smith Jr.



"Bad News for Outlaws" tells the story of Bass Reeves, a deputy U.S. marshal who was possibly the first African-American to hold the title.

received the \$1,000 Illustrator Award for his illustrations in a new edition of "My People" by Langston Hughes. The 2010 Coretta Scott King/John Steptoe Award for New Talent went to Kekla Magoon for "The Rock and the River," the story of a boy watching his father follow the teachings of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., and his older brother support The Black Panthers.

The first Coretta Scott King-Virginia Hamilton Award for Lifetime Achievement was handed out in 2010 to Walter Dean



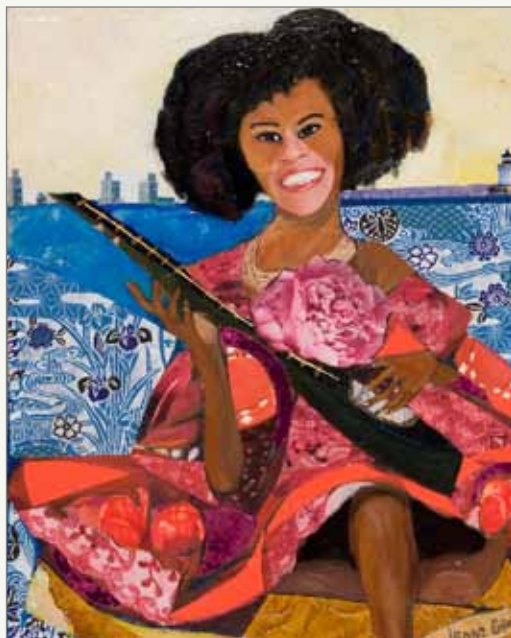
Author Vaunda Nelson

Myers, whose fiction, biography, poetry, history and memoirs were lauded by ALA Award Committee Chair Barbara Jones Clark, for offering "a mirror, validating lives of young people whose varied existence remains in the shadows virtually invisible to the larger world."

What better outcome could one want from a chance meeting in 1969 between two unassuming librarians?



"Diva of the Sea" by Jenne Glover



"Blossom Plays by the Sea" by Jenne Glover

Cultural connectivity

African-American History Month has a longstanding tradition of paying tribute to generations of African-Americans who helped strengthen and invigorate our nation. The artists featured in this issue of *Unity* note commonality in their cultural roots and how their abstract and mixed media works are closely tied to those roots. Their work successfully incorporates elements that are indicative of other cultures as well.

Jenne Glover

Jenne Glover is a native of Washington, D.C. Her love of the arts began during childhood when she and her dad visited local art galleries and museums on the weekends. In addition, Glover states that through the guidance and support of an artist mentor, "her journey as a painter and mixed media artist began."

Glover says both works selected reflect her "love and affinity for water." She notes that water is a significant element for African-Americans because they survived the Middle Passage. Glover's use of handmade paper, fabric and paint provides a kaleidoscope of color and texture in her work. "Diva of the Sea," Glover says, is her rendition of the "mystical mermaid who is immortalized around the globe." She points out the rich gold color and texture in the diva's tail are "reminiscent of the scales of a fish." The mermaid's pose shows self-confidence and is, as Glover puts it, "classy, sassy and has great presence." Glover describes the woman in

"Blossom Plays by the Sea" as "soulful and close to nature." Her look of bliss is obvious as she plays the lute and floats away from city life in the distance. The embellishment and flow in her dress show prominently as she drifts on mixed media waters.

Glover says because there is so much talent in the art world, it forces her to find her voice and unique ways to express herself. It is her desire to continue building on the services she renders to the art community through art and an online newsletter.

Stanwyck E. Cromwell

Stanwyck E. Cromwell was born in Georgetown, Guyana. He credits his artist growth and inspiration to his parents and a cousin, who is a notable Guyanese artist. Cromwell came to the United States in 1970 and has been a Connecticut resident for 37 years.

Cromwell's memories of Guyana are rich and abundant and his work reflects his Guyanese heritage. Cromwell's combination of figurative, abstract and surreal art forms provide movement "like an aesthetic chess game — one movement affects another." Vibrant colors, patterns and textures become integral parts of that movement. He also uses multiple overlays of paint to create depth and imaginary mindscapes. The layered textures of oils rendered in "Fruit Vendors" are a tribute and a testimony to the luscious and fertile landscape of Cromwell's



native land. Guyana is known for its diverse fruits and vegetables, thus, "Fruit Vendors," Cromwell says, "is recognition to farmers and their endless dedication as providers of the people." The abstract structure of a woman's face in "Moment of Truth" shows meditation and solitude. Cromwell states the woman "is able to postpone her personal problems and enjoy a moment of serenity."

Cromwell believes there are many similarities between African-Americans and the people of Guyana. "We are both from the African Diaspora with similar ancestral and individual struggles," he comments. It is Cromwell's hope that, as an artist, his work will be a testimony to the Diaspora through his "God-given gift."

Aileen Ishmael

Aileen Ishmael has been an artist for as long as she can remember. She proclaims that creativity has always been her lifeline and it has allowed her to "see the world through different lenses. The world can be a beautiful place," says Ishmael, "and I want people to look at my work and see that beauty."

Ishmael has traveled throughout the world. During her trip to Mexico, she viewed artwork illustrating the sun, which inspired her piece, "Sunny Side Up." Ishmael states,

"This piece was done to pay homage to my trip to Mexico and Mexican art, which uses vibrant colors in wonderful combinations." The pensive sun faces are made of papier-mâché. Her childhood fascination with puppets also influenced her to make the suns into paper puppets and the rich orange shadow box, their stage. Ishmael's clever use of movable arms and legs give the appearance that the suns are ready to perform. Ishmael's love of vintage photographs, which she defines as "visually stunning," is revealed in "Falling Leaves," featuring an

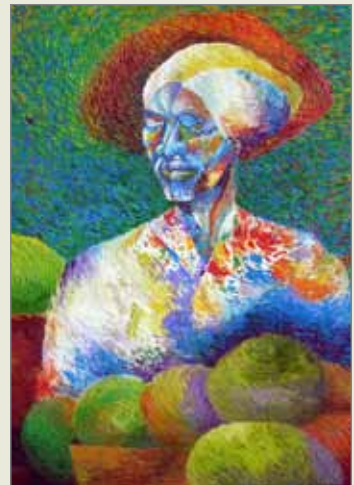
African-American couple on a Sunday stroll. Their extended metal hands are symbolic of the yearning that they have for each other. The tree branches provide "life" to the piece as do the silver charms — falling leaves — that rest on the river rocks. She notes, "It reminds me of a strong sense of family in the black community." "Serenity," chosen for *Unity's* cover, was created because of her love for rich colors and textures.

The brilliant royal blue top juxtaposed against the woman's chocolate face and orange-stained background allow the blue to "pop." Her use of black images against an Asian backdrop was influenced by a yearlong stay in Japan. On occasion, Ishmael makes her own jewelry using silver and beads, which also appears in this work and others.

Ishmael lauds her parents as being her inspiration to become an artist. "They believed that I could do anything if I put my mind to it," she says lovingly. Ishmael, also a sixth-grade teacher, attempts to create that same mind-set in her students "to know they can use a never-ending imagination to contribute to the world."



"Fruit Vendors" by Stanwyk Cromwell



"Moment of Truth" by Stanwyk Cromwell



"Falling Leaves" by Aileen Ishmael



"Sunny Side Up" by Aileen Ishmael

Ain't nothing like the real thing

There's a restaurant on Washington, D.C.'s U Street often dubbed a hybrid: an urban American locale with a sexy, European vibe whose menu boasts fried chicken and waffles along with moules frites. You could say the establishment's namesake was a bit of a hybrid, too. Raised in the Pentecostal church, Marvin Gaye made his fortune as a much-lauded — and decidedly secular — R&B crooner. Marvin, the bistro/lounge/outdoor beer garden/restaurant located in the Shawn neighborhood, is a tribute to the seminal Motown singer.



Richard Perry/The New York Times/Redux

roots (barbecue ribs) and his stay in Belgium (Lobster Waterzooi). Gaye escaped to Ostend, Belgium during one of the most tumultuous periods of his life. The singer accepted the invitation of friend and boxing/music promoter Freddy Cousaert, who provided Gaye a two-year respite from substance abuse, a broken marriage, and problems with Motown and the IRS.

A favorite of White House staffers, Marvin might be the most boisterous place in D.C. The first floor, which is open only for dinner, is a warm take on the European bistro, with dark wood accents, huge mirrors and chalkboard menus. If you're only interested in the food, you should still make a reservation; otherwise, you might miss out. Entrees are comfortably priced from \$14 to \$25. Restaurant reviews tout the virtues of the duck confit, shrimp and grits, and mussels, and Marvin's servers are regarded as knowledgeable and some of the friendliest in town.

Upstairs is a homier room with banquettes, high-backed chairs and round bistro-style tables. This is where DJs mix Motown and R&B every night of the week. The big draw is the back deck, which feels as big as the two indoor rooms combined. Both bistro and lounge are usually packed.

Gaye would have been comfortable at Marvin. The D.C. native was raised in Shaw, the historic neighborhood where the likes of Duke Ellington and Lena Horne hung out. Today, the once largely African-American community is home to a diverse collection of landmarks that include the Lincoln Theater. Marvin's clientele, just like Gaye's fans, is diverse as well.



Nore's Slumbo

By Sunny Anderson,
Courtesy of Food Network
Serves 6-8

- 5 tablespoons butter
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 large Vidalia onion, diced
- 3 stalks celery, diced
- 1 green bell pepper, diced
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 tablespoon file gumbo powder,
plus extra for garnish
- 1 bay leaf
- 1 ½ teaspoons cayenne
- 1 ½ teaspoons paprika
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt,
plus more for seasoning
- ½ teaspoon dried thyme
- 1 teaspoon dried Mexican oregano
- ½ teaspoon black pepper,
plus more for seasoning
- 1 4 1/2-ounce can tomato paste
- 5 cups seafood stock
- 1 pound haddock, (1 ½-inch pieces)
- 1 pound shrimp, shelled, deveined
- 12 oysters
- 1 ½ cups lump crabmeat, picked over
- 2 tablespoons hot sauce
- 4 cups cooked rice

Heat butter and oil in a 6- to 7-quart stock pot over medium-high heat. Add onions, celery, pepper and garlic and saute for 5 minutes, until softened and slightly caramelized. Add gumbo powder, bay leaf, cayenne, paprika, salt, thyme, oregano and pepper and continue cooking, another minute. Add tomato paste and cook until it browns, another 4 minutes. Add seafood stock, bring to a boil then reduce heat and simmer 30 minutes. Right before serving, add haddock and continue to simmer for 5 minutes, then add remaining seafood. Cook another 5 minutes. Add hot sauce, and season with salt and pepper, to taste. Serve over rice and sprinkle with file powder.



Maria Baggett found her niche as a sushi chef through her first love — Southern cooking.

This sushi chef is on a roll

If Maria Baggett were not a sushi chef, she would, she says, be a horticulturist specializing in succulents, a novelist, a linguist fluent in at least five languages or perhaps a comedian. The wide range of her interests is as vast as her culinary abilities, but fortunately for the sushi aficionados in her hometown of Memphis, she is indeed a sushi chef.

Baggett got her start at The Chocolate Giraffe, the Mississippi restaurant and catering company she opened when she was a mere 22 years old, and later expanded to The Chocolate Giraffe Coffeehouse. Her specialty then was Southern cuisine infused with global accents. A customer's request for a sushi dinner party piqued her interest in the art form and she added it to her restaurant's menu.

Later, she closed her restaurants in hopes of becoming a sushi chef and headed to Memphis to work at Tsunami Restaurant, a move that surrounded her with seafood and Asian fare and solidified her longings of a career in sushi.

From Memphis, Baggett headed to The Golden State to study at the California Sushi Academy as part of the professional sushi chef program, finding inspiration along the way. "There is inspiration in everything," she says. "The way a candle smells, the colorful pattern in a scarf, the sound of candies shuffled in a dish ... I like to think that by keeping my five senses open, I can translate the pleasant things of life into my food."

At the California Sushi Academy, Baggett studied under sushi masters and assisted head sushi chefs in Venice and Hermosa Beach. She also helped cater sushi for noteworthy events in Los Angeles and ultimately completed the program with the distinction of being the academy's first African-American female graduate.

She returned to Memphis, working as a sushi chef for several years while gaining acclaim for preparing sushi with a Southern twist. Today, she teaches sushi classes at gourmet food markets and in private homes.

"Teaching the art of sushi has been the most meaningful experience," Baggett says. "Whether the students are children or adults, there is nothing like seeing the 'a ha' moment on someone's face when it just clicks."

Considered a traveling itamae, or a skilled sushi chef, Baggett has returned to Tsunami Restaurant, where she works as a "tsushi chef" and delights customers with innovative fusion sushi that pays tribute to the Pacific Rim.

Smoked Duck Maki

Yield: 4 sushi rolls (24 pieces)

- 4 4-inch-by-7 inch pieces of nori
- 1 ½ cup prepared sushi rice
- 6 ounces smoked duck, cooled to room temperature
- 8 3 1/3 inch slivers of red bell pepper
- 4 large fresh basil leaves

Cut smoked duck into 4 portions. Cut each portion into thin strips and set aside.

Place nori, rough side facing upward, horizontally on a bamboo rolling mat. (The slats of the rolling mat should be aligned horizontally.) Spread about 1/2 cup of prepared sushi across the nori, leaving the top 1/3 of the nori uncovered. Tear one basil leaf into 4 thin pieces.

Lay pieces horizontally, end to end in the center of the sushi rice. Place 2 strips of red bell pepper horizontally, end to end on top of the basil leaves. Lay duck strips horizontally, end to end on top of the red bell pepper slivers.



Starting at the bottom of the nori, use bamboo rolling mat to roll the edge of the nori over the rice and fillings. Lift rolling mat without lifting edge of nori and roll again until the top flap is tucked securely underneath. Set roll aside seam side down on a cutting board. Repeat above steps with remaining ingredients. Cut each roll into 6 pieces. If desired, served with pickled ginger, wasabi and soy sauce for dipping.

Adjust seasoning and serve with little bowls of your choice of garnishes so each diner can garnish his or her own serving.



Black classics at the Dusty Groove

Want Evelyn “Champagne” King’s upbeat “Smooth Talk” recording? How about Willie West & The High Society Bros.’ funky, laid-back “Lesson of Love”? Well, good luck finding these musical gems online. iTunes can’t help you. Nor can Rhapsody. In fact, aficionados of the soulful sound of yesterday’s black recording artists must often times feel as if they have an itch that can’t be scratched.

only — from a back-alley office on 53rd Street.” Hyde Park is on Chicago’s South Side and was once the home of President Barack Obama. The brick-and-mortar version of the Dusty Groove opened in 2001 at 1120 N. Ashland Ave., which is in a largely black area of Chicago.

The main musical focus at the Dusty Groove is the black recording artist, performing solo or in groups, who has set the standards in jazz, funk,

soul music, we originally only carried older work, but have since gone on to carry a huge amount of neo-soul artists — whose work we find as exciting as that of Marvin Gaye, Roy Ayers and other favorites from the ‘70s,” says Wojcik.

It’s easy to see why Dusty Groove’s customer base is very African-American. On why the store caters to this market, Wojcik explains. “... Our energy for the business came out of years of working at WHPK, a station in Chicago that’s got a wonderful reputation for community building on the south side.” Wojcik was a DJ on the station who learned about African-American artists from the older DJs, and from the listeners, who were always very vocal about what they wanted.



Dusty Groove in Chicago is the go-to source for classics from black recording artists of the ‘60s, ‘70s and ‘80s.

But fans of King’s 1977 release, Willie West et. al’s 2010 track and other R&B/funk/soul recordings do have a source for music that can be difficult to acquire on CD and vinyl. Yes, vinyl.

Turns out independent record stores aren’t dead. A few are still in brick-and-mortar form and some are strictly Internet enterprises. And then there are retailers like Dusty Groove America, which has a physical presence as well as a virtual one and sells new and used releases that are largely from African-American artists.

“Dusty Groove originated on the Web,” says owner Rick Wojcik. “We started out in 1996, in the Hyde Park neighborhood, running the store online

soul, Latin and hip-hop — mostly from the ‘60s through the ‘80s. But more genres are being added; for example, the store is a huge retailer of Brazilian music because some customers were very vocal about buying newer work. “In



The store specializes in vinyl records and tunes you won’t find on other Internet sites.



Evelyn King



Willie West

For years, Dusty Groove’s website (www.dustygroove.com) generated 90 percent to 95 percent of its business. But the Chicago store now generates 20 percent of its sales.

Wojcik is optimistic about Dusty Groove’s outlook. “Despite the rise of file sharing and online music, there’s still no real replacement for a physical format — the heft and sound quality of a well-made vinyl pressing, or the attention to detail and amount of music you can get from a great CD package, too. And I’d say that in the past year, we’ve probably grown more than ever before. ... We’ve even started selling 78s — those old, super-heavy, 10-inch singles that predate 45s. ... But our fate is always in the hands of the customers and we pay great attention to their wants and needs. If we didn’t, we’d never have survived this long ...”